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AUTHOR Freeman, Brenda J.; Coll, Kenneth M.
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ABSTRACT

This article is a comparative discussion of women's and men's development through an analysis of two current influential works. The discussion focuses upon the themes found in "Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986) and "Iron John: A Book about Men" (Bly, 1990). The discussion examines mentoring, utilizing power from within, connected ways of relating, and responses to authority figures. The viewpoints about men and women expressed in the two books are compared and other viewpoints are noted. A chart which compares epistemological developmental categories is presented. For women from the Belenky book these five categories are given: silence; received knowledge; subjective knowledge; procedural knowledge; and constructed knowledge. For men from the Bly book these eight categories are given: wildman; acknowledging wounds; descent; accepting the father; the garden; inner warriors; moving through the sequence; and the grief man. The article concludes that the two books are both important works in that they further understanding of men and women as well as cultivate more possible relationships between gender and human development. (ABL)

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GENDER DIFFERENCES IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: A COMPARATIVE DISCUSSION OF WOMEN'S WAYS OF KNOWING: The Development of Voice, Self and Mind AND IRON JOHN: A Book About Men

Brenda J. Freeman
Assistant Professor
Educational Psychology & Counseling
University of Wyoming
Laramie, WY 82071

Kenneth M. Coll
Assistant Professor
Educational Psychology & Counseling
University of Wyoming
Laramie, WY 82071

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Abstract

This article is a comparative discussion of women's and men's development through an analysis of two current and influential works. The discussion focuses upon the themes found in Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind and Iron John: A Book about Men, including mentoring, connected ways of relating, responses to authority figures, and utilizing power from within. The purpose of this article is to offer a brief description of both books and to explore the similarities and differences in the concepts and ideas of the two works. While Women's Ways of Knowing and Iron John differ in writing style and focus, they are contemporary discussions both of which focus on gender development.

Gender Differences in Human Development: A Comparative Discussion of Women's Ways of Knowing and Iron John

Early literature and research in moral, psychosocial and intellectual development, though predominantly dominated by male authors using male subjects, was intended to describe human development without regard to gender. Perhaps because of the feminist movement and the question of possible gender-bias in cognitive-development theories, the past ten years have brought about great interest in men's development, and perhaps even the beginnings of a men's movement, has gained significant momentum. This momentum is evidenced by the publication and discussion of new works such as Fire in the Belly (Keen,1991), as well as a rebirth in interest for Levinson's (1978) Season's of a Man's Life. The present article is a discussion of two influential works related to women's and men's development, Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986) and Iron John: A Book About Men (Bly, 1990).

Women's Ways of Knowing (Belenky, et.al.) presents a conceptualization of five ways of knowing which represent

epistemological categories discovered through in-depth, qualitative interviews of 135 women of different ages and backgrounds. The categories are: Silence, Received Knowledge, Subjective Knowledge, Procedural Knowledge (Separate and Connected), and Constructed Knowledge. The categories, which are reminiscent of stages, are not meant to describe a fixed, discreet, or universal process of systematic movement through developmental phases. Nor are they exclusive of men. They are, instead, a theoretical conceptualization which organizes the major themes and metaphors relevant to women's ways of understanding and experiencing the world around them. The authors credit extensively the work of Carol Gilligan (1982), and draw comparisons to the work of William Perry (1970).

Inspired by Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, Alice Miller and others, Robert Bly's Iron John is a work which outlines eight processes of the psychosocial development of men. Bly utilizes the Grimm brothers fairy tale "Iron John" as the vehicle to explore the stages that lead to self-fulfillment in men. The basis of Bly's text is taken from ten years of observation and discussion in male group therapy settings. From these observations and experiences, Bly developed eight (8) processes of male development, which are labeled: connecting with the wild man, acknowledging past wounds, descending into one's own

suffering and limitations, connecting with the father, cultivating boundaries, defending boundaries, the masculine sequence of red, white and black, and developing the ability to grieve.

The purposes of this article are twofold; 1) to describe the concepts and ideas in each work, and 2) to discuss the areas of overlap as well as differences in the concepts and ideas of both works.

Beyond the obvious gender emphasis, one of the major differences in the two views of development is that the Bly conceptualization of men's development centers upon more broadly psychosocial, intellectual, and cognitive development whereas Belenky, et al. focus specifically upon intellectual and moral development. However, from a meta perspective, there are many ways in which the two conceptualizations of development are similar. Both discuss human development as a fluid rather than a fixed process. Both stress that there is no "right" order of initiation and that categories or stages may be repeated. Both indicate that the categories are not exclusive to one gender. Belenky, et al. state that "similar categories can be found in men's thinking (p. 15)." Bly notes that he has attempted to "describe masculine in such a way that it does not exclude the masculine in women, and yet hits a resonant string in the man's heart (p. 235)." Both approaches identify one similar theme which is woven throughout the

categories. Women's Ways of Knowing uses the concept of voice as a crucial metaphor in understanding and distinguishing one category from another. In discussing male development, Bly relies upon the inner warriors and the "wild man" as guides and sources of energy propelling the male through the appropriate stages.

The categories in Women's Ways of Knowing, Received Knowledge, Subjective Knowledge, and Procedural Knowledge (Connected and Separate), suggest relevant concepts and ideas for a comparison with the Bly perspectives the wild man, acknowledging wounds, the descent, accepting father, defending boundaries (the garden and inner warriors), and masculine sequence.

INSERT TABLE 1

Received Knowledge and

The Masculine Sequence of Red, White, and Black

In the implied order of the categories in Women's Ways of Knowing, Received Knowledge, is the second stage, following Silence. Received Knowledge a typical stage for beginning college students, is characterized by a right/wrong perspective in which authority figures define truth for the individual. Truth, then, is static and external; it is not discovered, but rather, it is given to the individual. Belenky, et al. associate this category with the Dualistic stage in the Perry (1970) model, except that the men in the Perry model believe that when they learn all the truth there is to learn, they will become the authorities and distribute the truth to others. In contrast, Received Knowledge women tend to identify less with the authority figures. They also listen more than the Perry men, who tend to lecture, rather than listen (Belenky, et al., 1986).

Perry (1970), using an Ivy League sample, indicates that most young men are past Dualism by the end of their freshmen year. Conversely, the Received Knowledge phase for women, which consists of accepting male authority as "right" and adopting a passive position, is given much more emphasis; perhaps this suggests that though some men may

struggle with this developmental phase, it is not as difficult a stage for men as for women.

Bly's seventh process for men, referred to as the masculine sequence of red, white and black, is a cycle of movement from arrogance to obedience to acceptance. The obedience aspect of the cycle is quite similar to Dualism and Received Knowledge in that the men in this stage are said to passively obey rules and follow authority figures. Bly suggests that the "white knight" fights for good and engages in battles against wrongs such as drugs abuse. Ministers and Ralph Nader are said to be "white", while politicians merely try to look "white". Because the "white" males work to defend the good, the Bly process suggests, like Perry, that the "white" male relates to authority figures with whom he is engaged . He is not passive, rather, he is actively good, conventional and dualistic in viewpoint. In contrast, the Received Knowledge women interviewed by Belenky, et al. are more passive. They, like the male model, appear to think in black and white terms, but they are not inclined to disseminate or propagandize "good" through engagement with authority figures. In essence, they have little voice; they do not relate to authority so they make little attempt to become the authority. Another obvious difference relative to received knowledge is that Bly indicates that men must go through red

(rebellion) prior to white. There is no indication of rebellion prior to passive acceptance of authority in either the Gilligan (1982) or Belenky, et al. (1986) discussions of women's development. Rebellion, in fact, is one aspect of the process by which women shed the chains of Received Knowledge and move into a Subjective way of knowing.

One other thread connecting the theme of Received Knowledge in women's development to men's development is Bly's suggestion that men are sometimes passive in relation to their mothers as received knowing women are with authority (typically male) figures. More pointedly, Bly indicates that many young men are propagandized by their mothers in terms of their feelings and definition of masculinity. In several stages various mother figures are referenced as potential enemy figures who wield power over the passive male. Indeed, Bly contends that the "Twisted side of the Great Mother" unconsciously repeats the psychic pattern of her mother and grandmother by keeping the (male) child imprisoned and passive. It is to be noted that the passive male is considered a weak figure in the Bly developmental scheme.

Subjective Knowledge and The Wild Man, The Descent, and Accepting Father

The first process in the Bly model, Connecting with the Wildman, is similar in many ways to the Subjective Knowledge category in Women's Ways of Knowing. Subjective Knowledge is characterized by an understanding of the world from the personal perspective which may rely on subjective and/or intuitive processes. Bly's Connecting with the Wildman is descriptive of exuberance in Alice Miller's terminology (1983). Exuberance involves psychologically breaking away from parents in order to establish unbiased views of masculinity. Preferably this happens with the assistance of an older male figure outside the immediate family.

From a comparison point of view, both "Subjectivity" and "Connecting with the Wildman" involve a mentally healthy breaking away from comfortable, traditional ways of thinking and behaving. Breaking away is conceptualized in essence as a painful but necessary journey of disengaging oneself from established authorities and enmeshed family systems and values. One might extrapolate that both approaches support the existential position that society and the family unit may at times encourage and reinforce poor mental health in the

individual and therefore such values and traditions need to be challenged (Fromm, 1955).

It is interesting to note that the breaking away process in both approaches involves a psychological (and sometime behavioral) rebellion or reaction to persons of the opposite sex. In "Subjectivity", many of the women are described as reacting against male authority figures in their lives--men who may have failed them through physical or psychological abuse--and/or male authority figures in general in order to seek knowledge from inside rather than from external, all-knowing, male experts. Conversely, Bly maintains that men must rebel against indoctrination from their mothers which leads to a female, and often negative, viewpoint of their fathers and, therefore, of men in general. The son, if he does not rebel, develops a female biased notion of being male; a notion which must be discarded if the power of the wild man is to be harnessed. Similar to Subjectivity, this may well involve a process of rebellion from the opposite sex authority figure as well as the breaking of established family and societal norms.

In Bly's third process, Descending into an Acknowledgement of one's own Sufferings and Limitations, males must come to recognize and acknowledge their own past mistakes, psychological limitations, and dysfunctional aspects in their ways of being. Subjectivist women also

recognize their past mistakes. The recognition and acceptance of the frailty of the human condition may well be a critical aspect of development for both men and women. The approach that men take as described by Bly, however, is typically one of descending from an arrogant position to recognize weaknesses. Whereas Belenky, et al. suggested that women struggle to ascend from a silent and/or passive position to a stronger place of self-awareness by recognizing past mistakes, which involves the struggle to overcome a sense of powerlessness related to a lack of voice.

In transitioning out of Subjective Knowledge into Procedural Knowledge, the women in the Belenky, et al. study, through struggling to develop their own voices, come to reject dualism and accept the Perry notion of multiplicity, that there are many answers to a single question. Part of this acceptance is represented by a keen interest in listening and understanding the experiences of mothers, grandmothers, and women friends. This aspect is similar to the Bly notions of accepting the father figure, Bly's fourth process, and seeking older male mentors. It is part of the process of recognizing that the father (whom the son tends to view as a failed, dishonest, or weak figure) was not "wrong" and the son "right", rather, part of the father is interconnected with the son. Carl Jung (1959) refers to this process as

accepting the shadow, and Bly sees such acceptance as critical to connecting with male mentors and the wild man. As women move through Subjectivity they, too, develop the ability to understand other points of view. In shedding absolutism and intuition as the only ways of knowing in favor of a more reflective (and perhaps analytical) position, the women moving into Procedural Knowledge learn to analyze a problem from many different perspectives.

Separate and Procedural Knowledge and the Male Defending of Boundaries (The Garden and The Inner Warriors)

According to Belenky, et al. only the elite move into Procedural Knowledge or Connected Knowing, a place where process or methodology of decision making reigns all important. Procedural Knowledge is, in part, a recognition that "truth lies hidden beneath the surface.. knowing requires careful observation and analysis" (p. 94). Gone is the quick decision making based on gut level hunches. Now the hunches are heard, but they are tempered with reason, openness to the opinions of others, and humility. Procedural Knowledge can manifest itself as connected or separate knowing, terms which were borrowed from the work of Gilligan (1982).

Connected knowing involves a relationship with the object to be understood. With painfully careful listening, the connected knower absorbs and values highly the personal experiences of others rather than the studied opinions of authoritarian experts. The core of connected knowing is empathy, the ability to connect and understand another in such a way that one can verbalize the nuances of the other's point of view.

Separate Knowing is the traditional academic mode of understanding according to the Belenky, et al. text. It involves the process of analyzing a problem not from the perspective of those involved, but from various objective viewpoints. Separate Knowing is based on objective criticism of all perspectives, including one's own viewpoint. Gilligan (1982) associates Separate Knowing more with males than females. Belenky, et al. found that the women who adopted a Separate stance tended to be recent graduates from prestigious liberal arts colleges. The authors suggest that Separate knowing women in higher education have a greater likelihood of developing mentor or collegial relationships with faculty members, as this system reinforces a high degree of separateness.

The reliance on interdependence or relational connections crucial to connected knowing is also valued in Bly's processes, through his

discussion of male mentors and accepting the father. However, Bly strongly asserts that, in order to develop psychological health, men need to be able to determine careful boundaries. This heavy emphasis upon boundaries may reinforce the prevalent viewpoint that male development is more of a process of objectivity and separation; whereas women's development is perhaps more influenced by interrelationships. This is supported by Gilligan (1982) and Lyons' (1983) ideas regarding moral perspectives and identity development. Their work suggests that a responsibility or ethic of care orientation tends to develop through high inter-relatedness, and that a rights or universal principles point of view relates to separate or autonomous aspects of development. Like the authors under discussion, Gilligan and Lyons do not state that gender lines determine the process of development. However, they do imply that men are more associated with a "rights", autonomous and separate ways of understanding and that this viewpoint has long prevailed as "normal" in the major theories of human development (Gilligan, 1982; Lyons, 1983).

Bly also suggests that, though connected and separate knowing are not gender specific, they are gender related. Throughout his work, separation, as defined as boundaries, is a crucial theme. Indeed, much of Bly's discussion of masculine development involves the process of

becoming separate by discarding the dysfunctional views of authority figures and others. Bly suggests that men need to cultivate the inner warriors, his sixth process, as well as the wild man, because these inner beings "can make clear what we want without being contaminated in his choice by the opinions of others around us" (p. 110). Bly contends that men need to be the masters of their gardens through the establishment and defense of boundaries. He believes that when a man becomes shrewd at protecting strong boundaries he becomes more distinctive and his internal warriors will awaken. Throughout his work Bly suggests a psychologically defensive position, as in describing the strong warrior who protects his boundaries and acts as iron rather than as a "copper conductor", while awakening the inner warriors to combat shame and defend boundaries.

Clearly, Bly does not deny connectedness, but he suggests that men may be born into enmeshment and that much of the process of male development is, in essence, a process of setting up boundaries through a combination of separation from family views and traditions, then connection. This is most evident in his description of the mother/son relationship, where the beliefs and ideas of the mother have been introjected into the son, often causing dysfunctional views of male figures and unhealthy enmeshment with the mother. Bly cites Alice

Miller and Carl Jung to support this viewpoint. He suggests that to develop properly men must reject the unhealthy internalizations which originate from female figures in early childhood, establish boundaries, and then "internalize the significant male figures" (p. 101) and seek male initiators and mentors.

Bly is critical of the man who may be too connected to women and not connected enough with men. In the late sixties and seventies, according to Bly, the soft man developed--one who can be defined as a connected man who is so influenced by the feminist movement that he has lost his sense of male self. The author maintains that these men are unhappy, lack energy, and are laden with grief from their remoteness to male figures.

It seems apparent that the Bly work treats separate knowing as a healthy developmental position and suggests a mistrust of too much connectedness, particularly with women. Belenky, et al. differ from this position in that they suggest that connectedness is an equally healthy (if not somewhat superior) mode of development. Indeed, Bly may put too much emphasis on separateness and not enough on connectedness; which is a criticism made of other theories of development as well (Gilligan, 1982).

Conclusions

Bly's notion that the industrial revolution has caused sons not to know their fathers and, therefore, not to trust them or other males, may be unique to male development. In considering same-sex identification for women, the mother-daughter relationship, is seldom described as remote in developmental literature. Belenky, et al. discuss the women they interviewed as enjoying connecting with other women, in particular with familial women. Remoteness or psychological separation from the same sex parent apparently is more problematic for men than women.

The notion that women struggle to find voice and that some women struggle with a more fundamental development phase, silence, is not evident in men's development. Bly seems to assume voice in all his phases for men, albeit, many times it's the external voice of authority and society. But for women lack of voice appears to be a crucial recurring theme. Voice in this sense includes not only self-identification of opinions, thoughts, and feelings, but the ability to voice outloud to others those viewpoints. This theme of struggling to disengage from the power of authorities and experts is perhaps a more dominant thread in women's development than it is in men's development. The Received Knowledge phase for women is one which

many women never work through. If women in Procedural and Constructed Knowledge are well educated, then one might hypothesize that passively believing in the "experts" is related in some way to lack of access to education. If, indeed, men struggle less with this developmental task (a notion indirectly supported by both Perry and Bly), then perhaps belief in authority as "right" and the self as unknowledgable is related to traditional socialization of female children and reinforced by modeling. Belenky, et al. cite numerous studies that show early training for girls to be passive and boys to be active, which then encourages female deference toward authority figures. Moreover, they suggest that because the authority figures are mostly male, the female does not relate to them (such as teachers) in the active way that Perry suggests men relate.

The Bly notion of harnessing the power from within, though by no means unique to male development, is seldom given such emphasis in discussions of male development. From a Bly perspective, the male tapping into the authenticity of the inner warriors and the wild man for strength and direction suggests encouraging men to take control of their destiny, breaking of chains of traditional male socialization, and working to develop an internal locus of control as a means of carving out new roles. Likewise, Belenky, et al. encourage women to move

from silence and received knowledge to a position of internality, leading to connectedness and collaboration.

The importance of appropriate and meaningful mentoring relationships for both men and women is a theme that is strongly supported by Bly and Belenky, et al. Bly takes a position that men tend not to trust women or other men. A major theme throughout Iron John is the connection or mentoring relationship that the younger male needs with significant older male figures. Without these mentoring relationships, men develop a remoteness from their fathers and from other men, as well as a lack of resolve in their own identities and in their relationships with others. Similarly, Belenky, et al. support the idea of women connecting with other women and learning from the experiences of other women.

The need to find a place in developmental theory for non-competitive, connected ways of understanding for both genders is underscored by comparing these two works. While Belenky, et. al treat Separate and Connected knowing with equality, Bly takes a more conservative and traditional developmental approach in that he inexhaustibly argues for boundaries, and separation as integral aspects for healthy development. Though he encourages a mentoring relationship with older males outside of the family of origin, overall he

adopts a position that the connected male, must first be a separate male, otherwise he can become a "soft male" and disconnected from himself. Indeed, Bly creates a flavor in his text that may be overly critical and exclusive of women, especially the mother figure. Bly describes the process whereby the male is the victim of female introjections ("the twisted side of the great mother") which must be purged and then replaced by introjections from the wild man, inner warriors and male mentors. New boundaries then must be established and defended. His boundaries description is reminiscent of building a fortress with a moat in order to defend the ego from potential outside invading forces. Since the outside invading forces are oft times women, Bly's defensive position suggests a suspiciousness of more connected ways of being.

Few would argue that dependency and enmeshment should be defined as healthy, but the works of Gilligan (1982), Belenky, et. al. and others suggests that there are very healthy ways to interconnect both with and across gender lines. Bly's discussion is lacking in terms of this connectedness across gender lines. Indeed, it may well be very important for a man to break away from women (as symbolized by mother figures), and connect with men in order to find and develop his own masculinity. Yet, as Keen (1991) clearly indicates and Bly does

not, reconciliation and connecting with women during and after the journey into masculinity is also of paramount importance. The work on interdependency in intimate relationships, grounded in feminist theory and encouraging equal sharing of power in relationships, further supports high connectedness as a valued way of being. Though boundary setting and autonomy are important psychological tasks in human development, perhaps furthering our abilities to empathize and interrelate are equally important. In fact, many of the human development theories could be viewed as unbalanced in that they give a great deal of credence to separate, autonomous ways of being, and yet, may define high connectedness as unhealthy.

Women's Ways of Knowing and Iron John are both important works in that they further our understanding of men and women as well as cultivate more possible relationships between gender and human development. Neither work is comprehensive but important concepts and ideas are raised which encourage further investigation.

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TABLE 1

Epistemological Developmental Categories

WOMEN'S WAYS	IRON JOHN
1) Silence - feeling overpowered by authority	
	*1) Wildman- breaking away from parent values
*2) Received Knowledge - truth is defined externally	*2) Acknowledging wounds - seeing past mistakes
**3) Subjective Knowledge - understanding from an intuitive process	**3) The Descent- learning from suffering
***4) Proceedural Knowledge- hunches are heard but are tempered w/ reason, and opinions of others	**4) Accepting the Father- forgiving, accepting, understanding, and listening to older men
	***5) The Garden- establishing boundaries
	***6) Inner Warriors- defending against "shamers"
	*7) Moving through the sequence- from arrogance to obedience to acceptance
5) Constructed Knowledge- seeing the interrelationship between a specific piece of knowledge and various systems, disciplines and experiences	
	*8) The Grief Man- gaining the ability to grieve

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